

Message Text

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ACTION SCS-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CA-01 CAB-05 CIAE-00 COME-00
DODE-00 DOTE-00 EB-08 INR-10 NSAE-00 FAA-00 L-03
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FM AMCONSUL AMSTERDAM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3532

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

UNCLAS AMSTERDAM 687

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC, EAIR, NL

SUBJECT: PANAM LOW FARE FLIGHTS AMSTERDAM TO BOSTON

REF: STATE 172074 AND AMSTERDAM 676

1. SITUATION AMONG PERSONS WAITING FOR LOW FARE FLIGHTS TO US
DETERIORATED CONSIDERABLY IN LATE MORNING JULY 10. PANAM AGREED
TO GIVE SPECIAL TREATMENT TO GROUP OF SOME 150 AMCITS WHO
PRESENTED ORGANIZED PROTEST DURING WEEKEND. AMCITS CONCERNED
FLEW OVER FROM BOSTON IN JUNE AND EARLY JULY BEFORE BACKLOG
SITUATION DEVELOPED AND CLAIMED TO HAVE BEEN ASSURED ON ARRIVAL
IN AMSTERDAM THAT THERE WOULD BE NO DELAY IN GETTING RETURN
FLIGHTS. LEADERS OF GROUP DREW UP LIST WHICH THEY TOLD PAN AM
CONTAINED NAMES OF ALL THOSE MEETING ABOVE CRITERIA IN THE ORDER
OF THEIR ARRIVAL FROM BOSTON. PANAM INSISTED THAT LEADERS OF
AMCIT GROUP CONTROL THE LIST AND IN EFFECT ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY
FOR ASSIGNING INDIVIDUAL PRIORITIES.

2. WHEN MAKING UP PASSENGER LIST FOR JULY 10 FLIGHT, PANAM OFFICIAL
GAVE LEADERS OF AMCIT GROUP SIXTY BOARDING PASSES, OUT OF TURN,
TO BE DISTRIBUTED TO PERSONS ON LIST. ALTHOUGH THIS PROCEDURE
WAS APPROVED INITIALLY BY THE AMERICANS AND NON-AMERICANS WAITING
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FOR FLIGHT, A GROUP OF NON-AMERICANS SUBSEQUENTLY OBJECTED
TO PRIORITY BEING GIVEN TO AMERICANS.
CONCURRENTLY, SOME AMERICANS BECAME DISPLEASED WHEN THEY LEARNED
THAT LEADERS OF THEIR GROUP HAD GIVEN TEN OF THE OUT-OF-TURN
BOARDING PASSES TO NON-AMERICANS. THIS LED TO HEATED ARGUMENTS
AND NEAR FIST FIGHTS BUT THERE WAS NO VIOLENCE AS PANAM
POINTS OUT, LEADERS OF GROUP SERVED THEMSELVES AND LEFT JULY 10.

3. AS RESULT OF ABOVE INCIDENT, PAN AM HAS SAID IT WILL NO LONGER PARTICIPATE IN PLANS TO GIVE PRIORITY TO ANY GROUP AND THAT BEGINNING JULY 11 IT WILL RETURN TO SYSTEM OF CALLING PASSENGERS IN STRICT ORDER OF REGISTRATION ON WAITING LISTS. REGISTRATION STILL CONTINUING ON AFTERNOON JULY 10 DESPITE DUTCH GOVERNMENT STATEMENT THAT SYSTEM WAS UNACCEPTABLE AS REPORTED IN REFTTEL.

4. CONSUL GENERAL HAD EXTENDED MEETING WITH AMCIT GROUP AT AIRPORT IN LATE AFTERNOON JULY 10. PAN AM OFFICIAL WAS PRESENT DURING MUCH OF MEETING. AMCIT GROUP, SOME OF WHOM WERE ON PRIORITY LIST MENTIONED ABOVE, STILL INSIST THEY ARE ENTITLED TO SPECIAL CONSIDERATION. THEIR REASONS ARE BASICALLY THOSE PRESENTED BY FIRST GROUP DURING LAST WEEKEND. IN ADDITION, THEY ACCUSE PAN AM OF OPERATING A RESERVATION SYSTEM WHICH IS CONTRARY TO THE STANDBY NATURE OF THE LOW FARE FLIGHTS.

5. AMCIT GROUP NOW AT AIRPORT IS DRAWING UP PRIORITY LIST WHICH IT WILL PRESENT TO PAN AM ON JULY 11. TWO OF THE GROUP S LEADERS, DICK WESTON-JONES, MINISTER, AND GRAHAM THOMAS JENSEN TOLD PAN AM OFFICIAL IN CONGEN S PRESENCE THAT IF GROUP DOES NOT GET SPECIAL CONSIDERATION, ITS MEMBERS WILL PREVENT AIRLINE FROM OPERATING LOW FARE FLIGHTS BY BLOCKING ACCESS TO PASSENGER COUNTERS. BOTH MEN SAID ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASSION THAT THE SITUATION MAY
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BECOME DISORDERLY IF GROUP S DEMANDS ARE NOT MET. ANOTHER LEADER DR. ADAIR, A PH.D. WHO SAID HE IS THE NEPHEW OF A FORMER U.S. AMBASSADOR, SAID GROUP WILL RESORT TO CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE IF NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE ITS AIMES. GROUP SAID IT WILL ALSO SEEK MEETING WITH DUTCH CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITIES TO ACCUSE PANAM OF NOT ADHERING TO STANDBY OPERATIONS BECAUSE OF ITS REGISTRATION PROCEDURE.

6. ALTHOUGH RECENT DUTCH TV AND NEWSPAPER COVERAGE REPORTED PAN AM OFFICIALS IN BOSTON AND AMSTERDAM AS SAYING SIZE OF BACKLOGS IS INDICATION OF SUCCESS OF LOW FARE PROGRAM, WE FEEL SITUATION BECOMING GRAVE AND SHOWING NO SIGN OF SETTLING ITSELF. WE FEEL SITUATION IS REFLECTING UNFAVORABLY ON PAN AM AND THAT IT WILL ALSO REFLECT UNFAVORABLY ON U.S. MISSION AND CONGEN AMSTERDAM. IN MEETINGS AND PHONE COVERSATIONS WITH IRATE AMCITS, CONGEN HAS STRESSED PRIMARY REPONSIBILITY FOR TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS RESTS WITH PANAM. MOST DO NOT FIND THIS SATISFACTORY ANSWER. THEY FEEL USG COULD AND SHOULD DO SOMETHING TO PROVIDE TRANSPORTATION OR AT LEAST FORCE PANAM TO DO SO. WE HAVE SO FAR BEEN ABLE TO HANDLE REQUESTS FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE BUT WE FEAR THIS IS BUILDING TO SERIOUS WELFARE SITUATION. WE RECOMMEND DEPARTMENT BRING GRAVITY OF SITUATION TO PANAM ATTENTION AND

STRESS IT TAKE EMEGENCY STEPS TO REDUCE BACKLOG.

7. EMBASSY CONCURS IN ABOVE AND WILL BY SEPTTEL PROVIDE

FURTHER INFORMATION BASED ON CONVERSATIONS WITH PANAM ON SUBJECT
OF RELIEVING BACKLOG.

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